

To whom it may concern:

President Stephen L Richards said: “The Savior himself declared that he came to fulfill the law, not to do away with it, but with the law he brought the principle of mercy to temper its enforcement, and to bring hope and encouragement to [the] offenders for forgiveness through [mercy and] repentance.”

To this aim, we the students of BYU, in order to restore honor to the Honor Code and its enforcement, respectfully request the following changes to the university’s Honor Code policies and practices.

Elevate Counselor Standards

To ensure a positive student experience:

- Include a licensed psychologist in every HCO council decision.
- Actively work to diversify staff in future hiring opportunities to be more representative of students at the university.
- Require HCO employees, including counselors, administrators, and office staff to undergo the following annually:
 - i. Diversity & Cultural Competency
 - ii. Victim Advocacy
 - iii. Trauma Informed Interviewing
- Do not refer to administrative staff members as “counselors” unless they have relevant state licenses.
- Establish a regular university review of counselors and policy implementation that includes student input.
- Prohibit inappropriate questioning that harms student’s mental health, as determined by Trauma Informed Interviewing training and on-staff, trained psychological counselors.
 - i. These damaging, invasive, and unnecessary questions include, but are not limited to:
 - Graphic or invasive sexual questions.
 - Requirements to divulge sexual orientation of self or others.
 - Level or intensity of spiritual practice

Prevent Discrimination

To protect minorities and the marginalized:

- Replace the Homosexual Behavior Clause with the following anti-discrimination clause:

“BYU values and celebrates the diversity of its students. Any behavior or language that discriminates against or negatively targets anyone based on their race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, or religion is unacceptable and a violation of the Honor Code. Homophobic, sexist, or racist slurs and disparaging remarks are not tolerated.”

- Treat violations of the Law of Chastity equally, whether homosexual or heterosexual, in order to reflect church policy.
 - i. Only acts considered to be an Honor Code violation in a heterosexual relationship will be considered an Honor Code violation in a homosexual relationship.
 - ii. For instance: homosexual hand-holding, dating, kissing will not be against the Honor Code.
- Update Dress and Grooming Standards.
 - i. Remove any culturally insensitive or non-accommodating dress and grooming requirements; for example, prohibition of traditional hairstyles.
 - ii. Prohibit Honor Code Office from enforcing Dress and Grooming standards in a discriminatory manner towards students of color or LGBTQ students.

Enable Advocacy and Empowerment for Students

To educate and protect:

- Students will have the right to present their case to the Honor Council during the decision process.
- Adopt a Third-Party Advocacy Clause
 - i. This clause grants students the right to third party advocate(s) in any and all Honor Code Office meetings, interactions, and/or investigations.
- Include a segment in New Student Orientation educating students on Honor Code Office procedures, policies, and processes.
- Organize an independent student support group (perhaps nominated through colleges.)
 - i. The support group will be available to help students as they interact with the Honor Code Office by providing:
 - Information about the Honor Code Office processes, rules, rights and more.
 - A safe space for students to receive emotional support throughout the decision and punishment process.
 - Ongoing dialogue with minority groups on campus to avoid systemic targeting.
- Release (or publicly publish) a report summarizing Honor Code data to the general public and student population regarding the following:
 - i. How many students are investigated each year.
 - ii. Number of investigations/type of violations.
 - iii. Number found guilty, not guilty, or other.
 - iv. Aggregate demographic data for (race, gender, ethnicity, marital status, etc): number of allegations, found guilty/not guilty, disciplined, etc.
 - v. The duration of each investigation.
 - vi. How many students are disciplined, suspended, put on probation, and/or expelled each year.
 - vii. Publish full internal list of possible Honor Code violations.
- Review Honor Code report to ensure that minority groups and women are treated equitably to majority groups and men.

- Publish a simplified outline of the HC investigation process and student rights on the Honor Code website.

Promote Accountability

To foster trust between students and the HCO:

- Conduct an internal review of the HCO after the style of the Title IX office.
- Establish a rating system similar to course ratings to get anonymous and current feedback on HCO counselors.
- Clarify or remove vague and subjective parts of the Honor Code. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - i. “...any other conduct or action inconsistent with the principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Honor Code is not permitted.”
 - ii. “LDS students must fulfill their duty in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”
 - iii. “Generally, the university will follow the procedural guidelines as outlined in this document. However, the procedures set forth in this document are merely guidelines and are not intended to create any contractual obligations or expectations. The university reserves the right, at its discretion, to vary from these procedures according to the circumstances of individual matters”

Educate Students on their Rights

To inform and empower:

- Read students the following rights before beginning the disciplinary process:
 - i. Right to request a counselor of a certain gender.
 - ii. Right to know the identity of the accuser (barring situations involving abuse or violence).
 - iii. Right to read a report of your accusation before meeting with the Honor Code Office.
 - iv. Right to third party character witness/support throughout the process:
 - including but not limited to: peer, faculty member, or family member.
 - v. Right to expert witness/support throughout the process:
 - including but not limited to: therapist, other mental health professional, etc.
 - vi. Right to be assumed innocent until proven guilty
 - vii. Right to record meetings on an audio recording device.
 - viii. Right to see your personal Honor Code Office file.
 - ix. Right to view Counselor Code of Conduct.

Separate Academic Enforcement from Ecclesiastical Counsel

To maintain confidence of students in ecclesiastical leaders:

- Keep student/bishop disclosures private and unrelated to the actions of the Honor Code Office.
 - i. Bishops’ interviews will never put a student at risk of expulsion, barring situations of dangerous or illegal conduct that must be reported to police.
 - ii. End the practice of pressuring students to waive bishop confidentiality.

- Allow bishops to serve as an advocate or character witness in any HCO investigation per student's signed, personal request to do so.
- Discourage bishops from involving the HCO in the repentance process.

Improve Reporting Integrity

To promote a more Christlike environment at BYU:

- Do not accept reports of Honor Code violations that occurred before the student was admitted.
- Establish a procedure to identify intent and motivation behind third party reporting, and consider the relationship between accuser and accused.
- Offer more leniency to those who self-report.

Diversify Correctional Options

To keep the HCO's disciplinary processes proportional to the violation:

- Distinguish on record and in punishment between academic and non-academic violations.
- Set maximum punishments for each tier of violation.
 - i. Honor code counselors should rarely impose the maximum punishment.
- Allow students to work with their counselor to establish a contextually appropriate plan to correct behavior; i.e., a student can choose a spiritual or service oriented plan.
- Do not enforce academic punishment for a first-time non-academic violation.
 - i. Subsequent violations can involve escalation of punishment.

Update Policies

To prevent penalization for innocuous acts:

- Eliminate academic punishment for bathroom use in opposite-sex apartments.
- Update antiquated dress and grooming standards, such as:
 - i. Forbidding facial hair.
 - ii. Forbidding tight-fitting clothes, such as leggings.
- Schedule for regular revisions to the Honor Code, incorporating student input so as to avoid outdated policies in the future.

Establish a Path to Non-Religious Attendance at BYU

To accommodate religious diversity:

- Allow students who may struggle with or lose their faith in the LDS religion while at BYU to request an ecclesiastical endorsement from their choice of ecclesiastical leader, whether that be an LDS bishop or a leader of a different faith.
- Permit students who leave the LDS church to continue with their education at BYU, should they choose to, and pay non-LDS tuition fees.

Elder Uchtdorf said, "My beloved friends, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if we ever find ourselves living in fear or anxiety, or if we ever find that our own words, attitudes, or actions are causing fear in others, I pray with all the strength of my soul that we may become liberated from this

fear by the divinely appointed antidote to fear: the pure love of Christ, for “perfect love casteth out fear.”

In addition, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., testified: “You know, I believe that the Lord will help us... I believe he will answer our prayers. I believe that our Heavenly Father wants to save every one of his children. I do not think he intends to shut any of us off because of some slight transgression, some slight failure to observe some rule or regulation.”

We hope that working together, we the students, with the administration can cast out all fear, and make BYU a place full of the love of Christ.